

APPLICATION FOR UNITED STATES LETTERS PATENT

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TITLE: METHOD FOR PROCESSING ACCESS-REQUEST MESSAGE FOR
PACKET SERVICE

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DOCKET NO.: P-218

0993447.DEPOT
T0E230" / 244E660

METHOD FOR PROCESSING ACCESS-REQUEST MESSAGE FOR PACKET SERVICE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

[1] The present invention relates to a communication system, and more particularly to a method for processing an access-request message to authenticate a subscriber for a packet service in an IMT-2000 system.

2. Background of the Related Art

[2] In an IMT-2000 system, packet service is provided by performing authentication, authorization to access, and billing. The packet service is thus kept secure.

[3] In the IMT-2000 system, an Authentication, Authorization and Accounting (AAA) server performs the authentication, access authorization, and billing for an account. A Foreign Agent (FA) requests AAA service from the AAA server and provides a packet service for a subscriber to be authenticated by the AAA server. Transmission and reception between the AAA server and the FA is typically performed using a Remote Authentication Dial In User Service (RADIUS) protocol.

[4] The RADIUS protocol is a client/server protocol by which the AAA server authenticates users who request a connection through a dial up modem and communicate with a central server for authorization of user access for a requested system or a service. The

RADIUS protocol maintains user information in a central database so that every remote area server may hold the information of the database in common.

[5] Figure 1 is a flow chart illustrating the transmission and reception of a RADIUS protocol message between the FA and the AAA server in a related art IMT-2000 system. As shown in Figure 1, the RADIUS protocol has an authentication message, an authorization message and an account message.

[6] The authentication message is used to authenticate a user when the user logs on to an individual network or a public network including the Internet, for which a password is typically required.

[7] The authorization message is used to determine who is authorized to access a corresponding system in a multi-user computer system. It also indicates use authorization, such as an access range of a file, an allowed access time, or an allocated storage space.

[8] The authentication message and the authorization message include an access-request message for requesting access to a network of a terminal, an access-accept message for accepting the access to the network of the terminal, an access-reject message for rejecting the access to the network of the terminal, and an access-challenge message for requesting a challenge for the terminal.

[9] The account message is used to indicate the initialization of a packet service, a time and amount of the packet service to be provided, or the termination of the packet service. The account message includes an account-request message for requesting generation of billing information and an account-response message for accepting generation of billing information.

[10] Figure 2 shows a format of the RADIUS message. As shown in Figure 2, the message contains a code field, an identifier field, a length field, an authentication field, and an attribute field. The code indicates a type of a message, and is 1 byte in size. The identifier identifies messages by sessions, and is 1 byte in size. The length indicates the overall length of a message, including the code, the identifier, and the length of the length field. An authenticator is a value used for authentication, and is of 16 bytes in size. An attribute indicates an attribute of a main data.

[11] The RADIUS protocol message has an authenticator field for authenticating the value of the authenticator is a value that the FA produces arbitrarily. This value is not to be repeated; a value that has been used beforehand should not be used again. The reason why the authenticator is used as an arbitrary value is to prevent a hacker from stealing a message for malicious purposes. If the authenticator were fixed according to a message, a hacker could get a normal access-accept message from the AAA server by using the authenticator of a message produced on the basis of the commonly held secret key even though the hacker is not privy to the value of the shared secret key. Thus, the authenticator value needs to be changed every time a message is generated, thereby preventing the hacker from attacking.

[12] A related art method for processing the AAA to provide the packet service in the IMT-2000 system will now be described.

[13] As shown in Figure 1, when the FA 1 transmits the access-request message for requesting an access to the AAA server 2 (S1), the AAA server 2 analyzes the access-request message to perform user authentication. If the user is successfully authenticated, the AAA

server 2 transmits the access-accept message to the FA 1 (S2). When the access-accept message is transmitted, a connection is established. When packet data is transmitted and received, the FA 1 transmits an account billing request message for billing to the AAA server 2 (S3). The AAA server 2 then verifies the received account billing request message. If the account billing request is verified, the AAA server 2 transmits an account billing accept message to the FA 1 (S4).

[14] Figure 3 is a flow chart illustrating a related art method for generating an access-request message in the FA of the IMT-2000 system. As shown in Figure 3, the FA 1 generates an arbitrary 16 byte value to use as an authenticator (S11). The FA 1 next encrypts a user password by using the generated authenticator, a user password, and a secret key held in common by itself and the AAA server 2 (S12). It then writes the encrypted user password in the attribute field to generate a an access-request message (S13) and transmits the access-request message to the AAA server 2 (S14).

[15] Figure 4 is a flow chart illustrating a related art method for processing the access-request message received from the AAA server of the packet system. As shown in the drawing, the AAA server 2 decodes the received access-request message (S21). In order to decrypt the encrypted user password, the AAA server 2 inputs the authenticator value included in the decoded access-request message, the secret key held in common by the FA 1 and the AAA server 2, and the encrypted user password to an MD5 (Message Digest: encrypting/decrypting algorithm), and executes the MD5 algorithm, thereby decrypting the user password (S22).

[16] The AAA server 2 next compares the decrypted user password and a user password of a corresponding user stored in the database (S23) and performs user authentication. Upon comparison, if the two user passwords are identical to each other, the user authentication is determined to have been successfully performed. If, on the other hand, the two user passwords are not identical, the user authentication is determined to have failed (S24).

[17] If the user authentication has been successfully performed, the AAA server 2 generates the access-accept message and transmits it to the FA 1. If the user authentication has failed, the AAA server 2 generates an access-reject message and transmits it to the FA 1.

[18] A method for generating the access-accept message will now be described. The AAA server 2 puts a value signifying the access-accept message in the code field, and an ID value included in the received access-request message in the ID field. A whole length value of the access-accept message is put in the length field and a value of the authenticator field of the access-request message is put in the authenticator field. The AAA server 2 also puts the attribute values, which is information to be received from the access-accept message, in the attribute field and thus generates the access-accept message.

[19] The AAA server 2 inputs the access-accept message and the shared secret key known between the FA 1 and itself to the MD5 algorithm and executes the MD5 algorithm. As the MD5 algorithm is executed, a 16 byte message digest is created. The message digest is put in the authenticator field of the access-accept message to finally generate an access-accept message. The AAA server 2 then transmits the finally generated access-accept message to the FA 1.

[20] Upon receipt of the access-accept message, the FA 1 determines the ID value of the access-accept message and searches information of the access-request message matched with the access-accept message. The FA 1 then searches an authenticator value of the access-request message.

[21] The FA 1 stores the authenticator value of the access-accept message in a temporary storing area and writes the authenticator value of the access-request message in the authenticator field of the access-accept message. The FA 1 then executes the MD5 algorithm using the access-accept message of which the authenticator field has been newly filled and the shared secret key to be already known between the FA 1 and the AAA server.

[22] Thereafter, the FA 1 compares the 16 byte message digest value, that is, a value obtained by executing the MD5 algorithm, with the temporarily stored authenticator value, to verify the received access-accept message. If the message digest value and the temporarily stored authenticator value are identical to each other, the FA 1 determines that the received access-accept message is verified. If, however, the two values are not identical to each other, the FA 1 determines that the received access-accept message is not verified, discards the message, and transmits the access-accept message back to the AAA server 2.

[23] The related art IMT-2000 system has various problems. For example, after the user password is encrypted using the authenticator value, the FA 1 generates a final access-request message. Thus, when the AAA server 2 receives the access-request message, it decodes the access-request message and verifies the value of the attributes field of the access-request message, that is, the encrypted user password. Consequently, when the

access-request message is received, the access-request message must be analyzed to authenticate the user. In addition, authentication is performed only for the user; it is not possible to authenticate the access-request message itself.

[24] Therefore, if a malicious hacker transmits a large quantity of force access-request messages to the AAA server 2, the AAA server 2 must analyze the false access-request message one by one, and performs authentication by using the values of the attribute field. In this case, since the AAA server 2 performs various processes to attempt authentication, such as referring to the database and other resource allocation, the system becomes over-loaded, causing the system to crash.

[25] The above references are incorporated by reference herein where appropriate for appropriate teachings of additional or alternative details, features and/or technical background.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[26] An object of the invention is to solve at least the above problems and/or disadvantages and to provide at least the advantages described hereinafter.

[27] Another object of the present invention is to provide a method for processing an access-request message in an IMT-2000 system that is capable of directly verifying an access-request message itself without decoding.

[28] Another object of the present invention is to provide a method for processing an access-request message in an IMT-2000 system that increases a message processing speed.

[29] Another object of the present invention is to provide a method for processing an access-request message in an IMT-2000 system that reduces use of resources for a message processing.

[30] Another object of the present invention is to provide a method for processing an access-request message in an IMT-2000 system that improves the system performance.

[31] Another object of the present invention is to provide a method for processing an access-request message for packet service, including writing a temporary randomly generated authenticator value in an attribute field of an access-request message, encrypting a user password using the temporary authenticator value, executing an encryption algorithm using the access-request message having the temporary authenticator value and the encrypted user password, the access-request message having an authenticator field that is filled with a prescribed value to generate a message digest, generating a final access-request message by replacing the value of the authenticator field with the message digest, transmitting the final access-request message to an Authentication, Authorization and Accounting (AAA) server, and verifying the access-request message by the AAA server.

[32] Another object of the present invention is to provide a method for processing an access-request message for a packet service in a communication system, including writing an authenticator value for authenticating an access-request message in an authenticator field of an access-request message and transmitting an access-request message, verifying the access-request message by using the authenticator value of the access-request message when

the access-request message is received, decoding the access-request message if the access-request message is successfully verified, and performing user authentication by decrypting an encrypted user password of the decoded access-request message using a temporary authenticator value of the decoded access-request message and a shared secret key that is known to each of a message transmitter and a message receiver.

[33] To achieve at least the above described objects in whole or in parts, there is provided a method for processing an access-request message in an IMT-2000 system including encrypting a user password by using a temporary authenticator value which is differently created every time a message is generated, creating an authenticator value for authenticating an access-request message by using the temporary authenticator value and a shared secret predetermined between an FA and an AAA server, writing the authenticator value in an authenticator field and generating the access-request message, verifying the access-request message by using the authenticator value of the access-request message by the AAA server when it receives the access-request message, analyzing the access-request message in case that the access-request message is verified, and performing user authentication by decrypting an encrypted user password of the access-request message by using the temporary authenticator value of the analyzed access-request message and a shared secret key to be known between the FA and the AAA server.

[34] To achieve at least the above described objects in whole or in parts, there is further provided a method for processing an access-request message in an IMT-2000 system including writing a temporary authenticator value which is created differently every time a

message is generated in an attribute field of an access-request message having an authenticator field and the attribute field, encrypting a user password with the temporary authenticator value, executing an encrypting algorithm by using the access-request message having the temporary authenticator value and the encrypted user password and of which the authenticator field is filled with a pre-set specific value, and taking a message digest, that is, a value resulted from executing the encrypting algorithm, as an authenticator value; filling the authenticator value in the authenticator field, generating a final access-request message and transmitting the final access-request message to the AAA (Authentication, Authorization and Accounting) server, and verifying the access-request message by the AAA server.

[35] To achieve at least the above described objects in whole or in parts, there is further provided a method for processing an access-request message in an IMT-2000 system including writing an authenticator value for authenticating an access-request message in an authenticator field and transmitting an access-request message, verifying the access-request message by using the authenticator value of the access-request message in case that the access-request message is received, decoding the access-request message in case that the access-request message is verified, and decrypting an encrypted user password of the decode access-request message by using a temporary authenticator value of the decoded access-request message and a shared secret key to be known between the FA and the AAA server, and performing user authentication.

[36] To achieve at least the above described objects in whole or in parts, there is further provided a method of processing an access-request message, comprising receiving an

access-request message having a code field, an identifier field, a length field, and authenticator value, and at least one attribute field, the authenticator value being a message digest created by encrypting a temporary access-request message, and the at least one attribute field including an encrypted user password, processing the authenticator value to determine if the access-request message is a valid access-request message or an abnormal access-request message, and performing user authentication if it is determined that the access-request message is a valid access-request message and discarding the access-request message if it is determined that the access-request message is abnormal.

[37] To achieve at least the above described objects in whole or in parts, there is further provided an access-request message, comprising a code field to indicate that a message is an access-request message, an identifier field to identify an access-accept message corresponding to the access-request message, a length field to identify a length of the access-request message, an authenticator value including user authentication information and message authentication information, a temporary authenticator field; and an encrypted user password, wherein the authenticator value comprises a 16 byte message digest resulting from performing a prescribed encryption algorithm using a temporary access-request message containing the temporary authenticator and a known authenticator value that is pre-defined between a message origination point and a message destination point.

[38] Additional advantages, objects, and features of the invention will be set forth in part in the description which follows and in part will become apparent to those having ordinary skill in the art upon examination of the following or may be learned from practice of the

invention. The objects and advantages of the invention may be realized and attained as particularly pointed out in the appended claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[39] The invention will be described in detail with reference to the following drawings in which like reference numerals refer to like elements wherein:

[40] Figure 1 illustrates a related art method of transmitting and receiving of a RADIUS protocol message between an FA and an AAA server in an IMT-2000 system;

[41] Figure 2 illustrates a structure showing a format of a RADIUS message;

[42] Figure 3 is a flow chart illustrating a related art method for generating an access-request message by the FA in the IMT-2000 system;

[43] Figure 4 is a flow chart illustrating a related art method for processing the access-request message received by the AAA server of the IMT-2000 system;

[44] Figure 5 is a flow chart illustrating a method for generating an access-request message in an IMT-2000 system in accordance with a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

[45] Figure 6 illustrates a structure showing an access-request message format in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention; and

[46] Figure 7 is a flow chart illustrating a method for processing the access-request message in an IMT-2000 system in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[47] Figure 5 is a flow chart illustrating a method for generating an access-request message in an IMT-2000 system in accordance with the preferred embodiment. As shown in the drawing, a FA 1 generates an arbitrary 16 byte value and takes it as a temporary authenticator value (S101). The FA 1 inputs the shared secret key to be known between the FA 1 and the AAA server 2 to the MD5 algorithm and executes an MD5 algorithm to encrypt the user password (S102).

[48] Thereafter, the FA 1 generates a first access-request message by using the temporary authenticator value and the encrypted user password (S103).

[49] This is described in more detail, as shown in Figure 6. The FA 1 thus puts a value indicating an access-request message in the code field, an arbitrary value for identifying an access-accept message, that is, a response message, in an ID field, and an overall length value of the access-request message in the length field. The FA 1 puts a specific value predefined between the FA 1 and the AAA server 2 (for example, value '0') in the whole 16 byte of an authenticator field 'A', the temporary authenticator value in an attribute field 'B', the encrypted user password in a different attribute field, and other information in a different attribute field, thereby generating the first access-request message (S103).

[50] The FA 1 then executes the MD5 algorithm using the first access-request message and the shared secret key known between the FA 1 and the AAA server 2. From this, it takes

a 16 byte message digest, that is, a value resulting from the execution of the MD5 algorithm, as an authenticator value (S104).

[51] The FA 1 writes the generated authenticator value in the authenticator field 'C' of the first access-accept message, and finally generates a second access-request message (S105).

[52] Figure 7 illustrates a method for processing the access-request message in the IMT-2000 system in accordance with the preferred embodiment. As shown in the drawing, the AAA server 2 stores the value written in the authenticator field of the received access-request message in a temporary storing area and puts the specific value predefined between the FA 1 and the AAA server 2 (for example, '0') in the authenticator field (S111).

[53] The AAA server 2 inputs the access-request message of which the authenticator field is filled with '0' and the shared secret key to be known between the FA 1 and the AAA server 2 to the MD5 algorithm and executes the MD5 algorithm to generate a 16 byte digest (S112). The AAA server 2 then compares the 16 byte message digest with the temporarily stored authenticator value to verify the received access-request message (S113).

[54] Upon comparison, if the message digest and the temporarily stored authenticator value are not identical to each other, the AAA server 2 determines that the received access-request message is abnormal and discards the access-request message. If, however, the message digest and the temporarily stored authenticator value are identical, the AAA server 2 determines that the received access-request message is verified, and performs user authentication (S114). That is, the AAA server 2 inputs the encrypted user password of the received access-request message, the temporary authenticator value, and the shared secret key

known between the FA 1 and the AAA server 2 to the MD5 algorithm and executes the MD5 algorithm.

[55] According to execution of the MD5 algorithm, the AAA server 2 obtains the decrypted 16 byte user password. The AAA server 2 compares the decrypted user password and a password of the corresponding user stored in the database. Upon comparison, if the two passwords are identical to each other, the AAA server 2 determines that the user authentication has been successfully performed. If, on the other hand, the two passwords are not identical, the AAA server 2 determines that the user authentication has failed.

[56] If the user authentication has been successfully performed, the AAA server 2 generates an access-accept message and transmits it to the FA 1. Meanwhile, if the user authentication has failed, the AAA server 2 generates an access-reject message and transmits it to the FA 1 (S115).

[57] A method for generating the access-accept message and a method for generating the access-reject message are performed in the same manner as in the related art. The descriptions of these processes are thus omitted.

[58] As state above, in the method for processing an access-request message in a packet service in accordance with the preferred embodiment, a user password is encrypted using an arbitrary value which is created differently every time a message is generated. An authenticator is generated using a Code, an ID, a Length, a temporary authenticator filled with the specific value predefined between the FA and the AAA server, the arbitrary value, and the encrypted user password to thereby generate an access-request message. In this way, the AAA

server can directly verify the message itself without decoding the access-request message when it receives the access-request message.

[59] Generally, an Internet Protocol (IP) network for supporting the packet data service adopts a simple IP and a mobile IP. An authentication method of the IP network following the simple IP includes a Password Authentication Protocol (PAP) method and a Challenge Handshake Authentication Protocol (CHAP) method.

[60] In the PAP method, when a user transmits a user ID and a user password to the FA, the FA encrypts the user password and transmits an access-request message to the AAA server, requesting a user authentication. A connection is set up or cut off according to the user authentication. This method is featured in that the user password is transmitted to the FA without a security procedure and is encrypted to be transmitted between the FA and the AAA server.

[61] The CHAP method is directed to a more stable system connection compared with the PAP method. The FA transmits an arbitrary value to a user, and the user generates a uni-directional hash function value for the arbitrary value and transmits the uni-directional hash function value to the FA. The FA transmits an access-request message to the AAA server, including the arbitrary value and the uni-directional hash function value. The AAA server generates an uni-directional hash function value for the transmitted arbitrary value. The AAA server compares the received hash value with a hash value calculated by itself to perform user authentication. If the authentication is successfully performed, the server proceeds to the following procedure, while if the authentication fails, the server terminates the connection.

[62] The authentication method in the IP network following the mobile IP is performed in the same manner as that of the CHAP.

[63] The preferred embodiment is adaptable to both the simple IP and the mobile IP. When applied to the PAP method of the simple IP method, a new attribute field is prepared to which a temporary authenticator value is written. Alternatively, when applied to the CHAP method, a temporary authenticator value is written in the already prepared CHAP_CHALLENGE attribute field.

[64] The present invention and the preferred embodiment have many advantages. For example, the user password is encrypted by the temporary authenticator value and an authenticator value which is able to verify an access-request message itself is generated, so that when the AAA server receives the access-request message, it can directly verify the access-request message without analyzing the received access-request message.

[65] Therefore, even if a malicious hacker transmits a large quantity of false access-request messages to the AAA server, the use of the system resource and the message processing time are reduced, and the system is thus prevented from crashing and the system performance is consequently improved.

[66] The foregoing embodiments and advantages are merely exemplary and are not to be construed as limiting the present invention. The present teaching can be readily applied to other types of apparatuses. The description of the present invention is intended to be illustrative, and not to limit the scope of the claims. Many alternatives, modifications, and variations will be apparent to those skilled in the art. In the claims, means-plus-function clauses

are intended to cover the structures described herein as performing the recited function and not only structural equivalents but also equivalent structures.